**Part B: Needs Assessment**

*The candidate will develop a needs assessment based on the results of the data. The needs assessment should include a background description of the setting, a clear statement of the purpose of the needs assessment, a list of participants who participated during the needs assessment process, and at what stage of the process the participants were active, an analysis of the findings, and a set of recommendations that identifies strategies that will help lead the school to a safer, more culturally diverse environment for teaching and learning. (First of three analyses contributing to the CAAP).*

While an analysis of the TWCS data indicates many areas of strength for WSE, there are three substantial areas of weakness: Community Support and Involvement, Teacher Leadership, and School Leadership. First, in the area Community Support and Involvement, 48% of those surveyed disagreed or strongly disagreed that parents were influential in school decision making processes. Parental and community involvement is a substantial weakness in all areas at WSE, thereby limiting the feedback and influence of a key segment of school stakeholders. Efforts to address this deficiency were undertaken during the 2010-2011 school year by requiring mandatory grade level newsletters and utilizing ConnectEd to inform parents of school events. This school-wide expectation was implemented with the hope that more frequent communication would prompt a higher level of family participation in school processes. However, significant barriers related to transportation and family involvement due to the school’s designation as a county-wide magnet continued to inhibit wide-ranging stakeholder participation. The school’s conversion to a Title I neighborhood school in the 2011-2012 school year will alleviate some of the transportation issues. Nevertheless, WSE must be conscious of other concerns inherent in a more economically disadvantaged population, including transportation issues, conflicting job responsibilities, childcare concerns, and cultural and lifestyle beliefs resulting in generally negative views of education.

In addition to parental influence, WSE’s results indicated concerns in the areas of Teacher Leadership, specifically the effectiveness of group decision making processes. The following feedback was provided by Bonnie Douthitt, kindergarten teacher, when asked specifically about the strengths and weaknesses in the school’s decision making processes:

“I feel the strengths in the decision making processes for our school are mostly in the classroom.  The teachers are able to decide how to teach to the learning styles of their students, performance levels, and instruction technologies, etc.  However, I feel that one of the key components to effective decision making is communication and teamwork, which has been an issue for a while. As a school we need to have decision making teams set up for identified areas of need in our school.  Issues and concerns could flow through the team process. By giving authority, flexibility, and resources to solve educational problems in the school to teams, we would develop more positive relationships. This collaboration and participation in decisions are likely to bring positive change to student achievement.”

This feedback points to several weaknesses in WSE’s teacher leadership initiatives. First, members of the School Leadership Team are appointed by administration. The result of these administrative appointments is that a core group of teachers are utilized over and over again as school leaders and decision makers. Therefore, the school loses valuable opportunities to develop a wide-base of teacher leaders. Since such leadership is not distributed, many teachers are excluded from providing valuable input in important school decisions, which negatively impacts the culture of the school.

Finally, WSE’s TWCS results in the area of School Leadership indicated that 36% of respondents were not comfortable raising issues or concerns with school administration. The leadership style of the principal has historically been authoritative, coupled with a firm belief that situational conflict can serve as a professional growth mechanism. However, this particular style has inhibited the sharing of constructive criticisms and reform ideas from many members of all stakeholder groups. In addition to this element, 38% of those surveyed did not feel the School Leadership Team was an effective resource in school decision making processes. As stated previously, WSE’s SLT is selected by administration and includes mostly the core group of teachers regarded as the school leaders. The team works together for several sessions to create the required school improvement plan and submits it to the district. However, rather than being an integral part of the school and responsible for leading and monitoring school progress toward SIP goals, the team disbands once the SIP document is completed. In addition, school-wide communication of the plan has been mediocre at best. These weaknesses contribute to staff reluctance to voice concerns regarding school initiatives and limit the scope of the school’s problem solving capabilities.

**Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District Parent Survey Data Analysis**

Communicating successfully involves sharing relevant information in a timely manner with appropriate stakeholders. In addition to being fully informed, stakeholders must believe they play an important role in the school’s decision making processes. As discussed previously, families and staff generally give Winding Springs Elementary (WSE) high marks as a good place to learn and work. However, in the 2010-2011 Parent Survey administered by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School district, WSE exhibited severe shortcomings in one particular area: family involvement and communication. 100% of parents surveyed indicated they were not a part of the School Leadership Team. Additionally, 16% of respondents indicated that WSE did not provide resources and information to help them get involved in their child’s education, which was well l above the district rate of 6.6%. Both measures indicate that WSE has not engaged outside stakeholders in meaningful involvement in school decision making.

**School Leadership Team Feedback**

Feedback from WSE’s School Leadership Team is also consistent with the Teacher Working Conditions Survey data and the Charlotte Mecklenburg School district Parent Survey data. In an email dated June 27, 2011, School Leadership Team members were poised two open response questions regarding school leadership decision making processes and stakeholder communications. Every response included weakness statements centered on poor communication with families and the outside community, which adversely affects involvement of these stakeholder groups in pursuing the goals of the school. Jesse Casilio, 5th grade teacher and School Leadership Team member, remarked,

“Whoever is affected by the decision should have time to input their ideas and suggestions. Before a final decision is made, a majority of the people should be on the same page so that upon implementing the decision, it is embraced and carried out to its fullest potential and intention.  Leadership is most effective when the followers under the leadership are valued and have ownership.  When the followers are able to take ownership in making decisions or have a part in the decision process, it makes the leader more effective and respected. They are also able to gain a wider group of followers when implementing decisions in the future.”

In the 2011-2012 school year, Winding Springs Elementary will convert from a county-wide magnet program to a neighborhood school. This transition began in February, 2011 with the displacement of all school staff with the exception of the Principal, Myrna Meehan. District directives required the school to go through the “closing” process and all interested parties to reapply for their positions as a “newly opening” school. While the process offered administration the opportunity to reorganize the school with a mix of current and new instructional and support staff, the resultant impact on the school culture was devastating. The final months of the 2010-2011 school year saw the school mired in conflict and strife. Staff members who are returning for the 2011-2012 school year must be provided explicit training and supports in order to move away from past negativity and embrace a new perspective and new teammates in order to transform the school culture. In addition, new staff members must feel they are a vital part of the establishment of a new organization and commit to the school re-culture process as well.

Based on these factors and the requirements of this portfolio project, a school culture team was convened. The team consisted of the following staff members:

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| **Participants** | **Instructional Role** | **Needs Assessment Role** |
| Myrna Meehan | Principal | Administrator – responsible for “big picture” leadership, sharing knowledge and experience with Leadership integration into the school environment, approving budget resources to support cultural initiatives, and approving school-wide culture initiatives |
| Presley, Penny | Dean of Students | Facilitator – responsible for team logistics, feedback collection, school-wide communication, program development, and program implementation |
| Stolz, Karl | Music | Team Member – responsible for providing feedback regarding school culture and participating in developing the action plan to begin establishing a school culture with a foundation on Steven Covey’s 7 Habits; School Leader of RtI Behavior/PBIS initiative and school-wide trainer |
| Fink, Jesse | 3rd Grade | Team Member – responsible for providing feedback regarding school culture and participating in developing the action plan to begin establishing a school culture with a foundation on Steven Covey’s 7 Habits; Member of previous year’s Intervention Team sharing insight regarding RtI process and school-wide embracing of “All staff responsible for all students” |
| Williams, Paula | Exceptional Children | Team Member – responsible for providing feedback regarding school culture and participating in developing the action plan to begin establishing a school culture with a foundation on Steven Covey’s 7 Habits; School Leader of RtI Behavior/PBIS initiative and school-wide trainer |
| Robertson, Phillis | Kindergarten | Team Member – responsible for providing feedback regarding school culture and participating in developing the action plan to begin establishing a school culture with a foundation on Steven Covey’s 7 Habits |
| Jesse Casilio | 5th Grade | Team Member – responsible for providing feedback regarding school culture and participating in developing the action plan to begin establishing a school culture with a foundation on Steven Covey’s 7 Habits; School Leader in Student Leadership initiatives and personal empowerment |

The team’s goal was to develop and implement a few key initiatives revolving around engaging all staff members in the school re-culturing process. The initial action plan’s foundational premise was based on Stephen Covey’s books “The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People” and “The Leader in Me”. These particular books strongly support the school’s continued vision of providing students the leadership skills necessary to promote their success in a highly competitive global economy and emphasize foundational practices that are key to establishing a new school culture. The initiatives, along with a summary explanation of each, are included in the table below.

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| **Initiative** | **Status** |
| DiSC© Personal Profile System Staff Engagement Activity | Staff participated in this first day engagement activity intended to explore individual traits within a group dynamic. Break-out groups created graphic organizers explaining the four profiles and discussion centered around how to utilize the information to aid in personal and group interactions. Administration created a chart of staff names and their respective profiles in order to facilitate a more in-depth understanding of staff members. Profile graphic organizers were placed in the school’s resource room where a variety of team planning and PLC groups meet on a regular basis. The organizers serve as a visual aid in working together across the total school environment. |
| Seven Habits School-wide Implementation | Staff members were provided Stephen Covey’s “Seven Habits of Highly Effective People” and “The Seven Habits Personal Workbook” as summer reading requirements. Each grade level has been provided a copy of “The Seven Habits for Kids Storybook” to aid them in leading students in learning and implementing the seven habits in the school setting. Parents will be provided dialogue sheets to discuss the seven habits stories with their children. Bulletin board resources from Franklin Covey have been posted in the school’s main hallway and each grade level will be posting student work relating to each of the seven habits. The school will be highlighting one habit per month in school-wide communication and one of the habits will be included as a staff meeting topic at each school-wide staff meeting. |
| “The Leader in Me” Book Study | Stephen Covey’s “The Leader In Me” was provided to each staff member as a resource to use in implementing WSE’s leadership theme. Staff members will be participating in an informal book study. Guiding questions have been provided to staff members and are included as a portfolio attachment. Plans are being made to arrange a visit to the A.B. Combs Leadership School in Raleigh, North Carolina in order for staff members to generate additional ideas and discussion regarding student and staff leadership initiatives at WSE. |
| School Leadership Team Election Process | As mentioned previously, WSE’s school administration had selected School Leadership Team members in years past. For the 2011-2012 school year, staff members were allowed to choose three committees they would like to serve on and committee selections were made by assigning each member to either their first or second choice committee. In addition, one instructional and one non-instructional staff member were elected to the School Leadership Team by a school-wide secret ballot. Finally, this year’s SLT will include three parent representatives rather than a lone representative as in previous years. This new process should positively impact both the TWCS data and parent involvement data regarding school-wide participation in School Leadership activities. |